

SPECIAL ADVERTISING FEATURE

Home *Guide*



Blooming abodes

Tips for spring-ifying your home.

WRITTEN BY HEIDI BETHEL

Spring has sprung in Reno-Tahoe, and now's the time to get your home ready for the warmth and sunshine on the horizon. We spoke to a range of local experts for tips on making your home blossom this spring.





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Check Those Appliances

After heavy furnace use during the winter months, it's a good idea to make sure home air filters are changed, and to do so every 90 days, says Rickey Hayes, marketing manager for Sierra Air in Reno. He also suggests a test run of the air conditioner during March or April to ensure it's running correctly.

"Turn on your AC when it's a 75-degree day, rather than waiting until those 90-degree days when you actually need the cool air," Hayes advises. "We get really busy during the summer, and it's better to get any work done and an annual tuneup when it's convenient for you, rather than having to wait in the heat."

Speaking of delays, many appliance manufacturers are reporting extremely long lead times on both replacement parts and new products. Steve Gunderson, kitchen designer for Czyz's Appliance in Reno, reminds folks to be aware of how appliances are running in their homes — especially refrigerators.

"Keep an eye on your fridge; make sure the coils are kept clean and maintenance is done according to the manual," Gunderson adds. "Be mindful if it's been making a noise for the last year and a half; don't wait until you wake up in the morning and you have ice cream on the floor. It could be four or more months to get a new one."



Kitchen Transformations

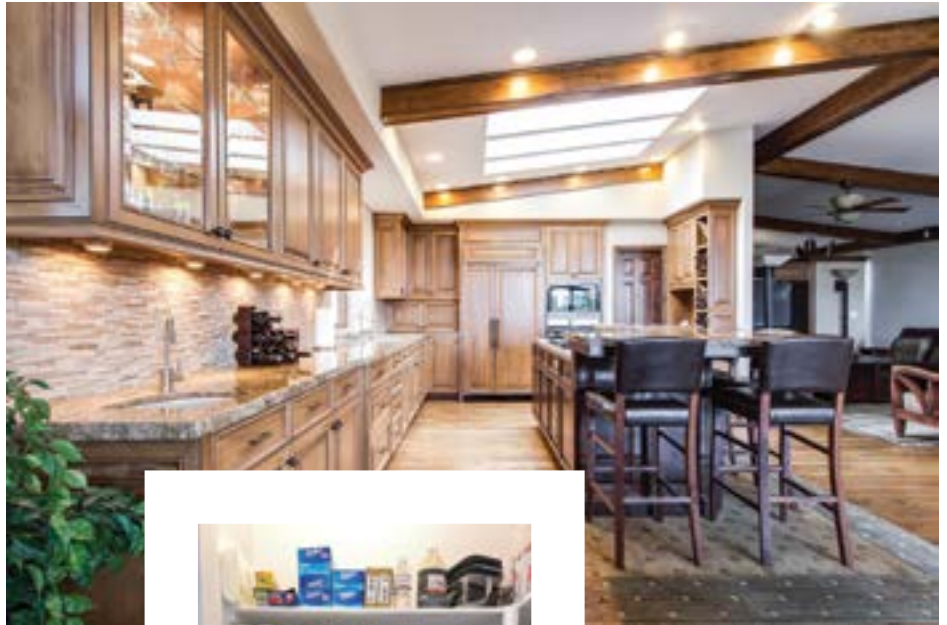
Whether it's a complete renovation or updated cupboard space, changes in a kitchen can make a dramatic difference without costing a fortune.

As Sandy Tyler, aka The Kitchen Lady, with Kitchen Cabinets Reno, explains, "It's less than you think. I've had people tell me they can't afford to do their kitchen because they think it's going to cost \$50,000. In reality, we can work with any budget."

Tyler says the step to take if you're considering kitchen modifications is to schedule a complimentary in-home visit with the experts who will explain the options.

"People get frustrated when working in old, outdated, poorly designed floor plans," Tyler says. "That's usually why they redo their kitchens, because they don't function well for them."

In addition to the floor plan, organizational revamps are extremely popular, and for good reason. California Closets in Reno offers pantry and kitchen storage solutions. Designer Erin Morse can work with just about any space to create order behind the scenes.



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"With the pantry totally organized, it helps with your day and getting the family ready," she says. "We're available to work with all sizes. Even in a small space, we have clients with pantries under the stairs. We can find solutions to all storage dilemmas."

Dan Du Mond, California Closets design manager, adds, "The growing trend is to see pantries built as cabinetry in a kitchen and dining room. It's not uncommon to convert a blank wall into an ornate pantry."

Selling Prep in the Spring

Spring traditionally is when the real estate market begins ramping up for the summer.

Sam Olson, team lead/owner of The Olson Group of RE/MAX Gold in Reno, explains, "It's a great time for the people who want to move in the summer to meet with an agent to start planning a marketing strategy and fix anything that may have happened to their current home. We can talk about curb appeal because everything is coming to life again."

"Take advantage of the sunny weekends — clean the garden, clean the leaves, and plant some flowers," he continues. "Your home sells in six seconds ... three from the curb and three right inside the front door. If those two are not dialed in, it won't sell as quickly or at top dollar. The first impression means everything."



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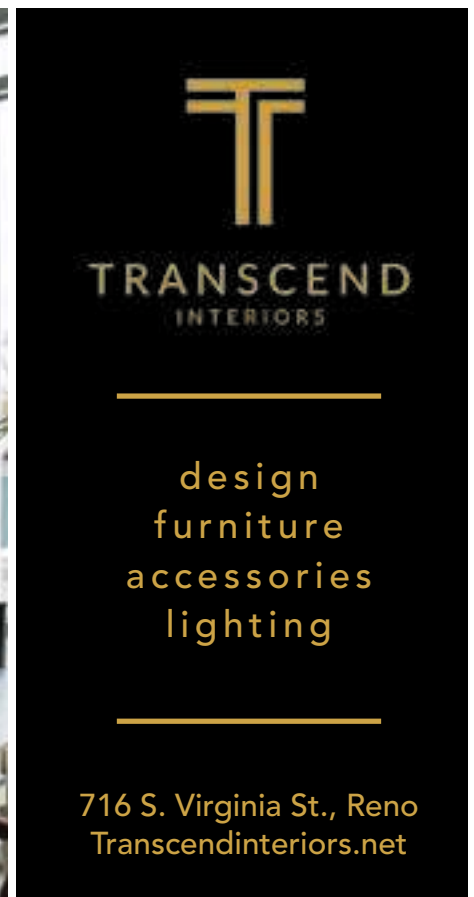
As tax preparers are busy with filings and returns, the rest of us often hold off on big purchases until after April 15, when we have a handle on our tax burdens. Potential homebuyers tend to wait until they receive their refunds before exploring the idea of purchasing a home. Shane Braninburg, mortgage consultant with Big Valley Mortgage in Reno, suggests getting a jump on financing as soon as possible for numerous reasons.

"The reality is we're in the lowest interest-rate environment ever, underline ever," he explains. "This has caused demand to spike and supply to drop, which means the price goes up, resulting in a cost for waiting. Now is a great time to get ready. You may have work to do, and it's better to be prepared in the process."

Even if you're only considering buying a new home, Braninburg recommends meeting with a local loan officer to determine eligibility and next steps.

It's All About the Builders

While a search on various housing market sites may reveal properties available for sale, the volume of existing houses for purchase in Reno-Tahoe has reached record-breaking lows over the past year. Local Realtors agree that working with builders is a great option for people who have time on their side.



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"There is a very high demand for homes in Reno," says Caryn Pollock, marketing manager for the Reno division of Toll Brothers. "Existing new-home inventory is at historic lows, prices are rising, and it is common for sellers to receive multiple offers. Homebuilders also are experiencing this same high level of demand. For those wanting new homes in our area, they may need to wait for the homes to be built. The good news is that when one chooses a newly constructed home, he or she can personalize the finishes."

Karen Walker Hill, residential specialist for Ferrari-Lund Real Estate in Reno, echoes Pollock's sentiment. She notes that for new construction, build-out time can be as much as a year and as short as six months.



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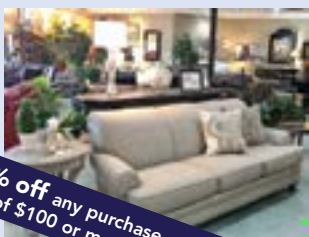
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"Start early because everything is taking longer," she adds. "Every time the builder does a release, they're increasing their prices anywhere from \$2,000 to \$10,000 per release. By waiting, your move-in time gets pushed back and your prices are much higher."

When visiting a builder's showroom or model houses, be sure to include a Realtor in the process. Betsy Caron, realtor with Berkshire Hathaway HomeServices Drysdale Properties in Sparks, recognizes the value in purchasing new construction and knows the right questions to ask along the way.

"It's really important that the general public knows, when you're going to see a home development for the first time, have your agent go with you or call before," Caron adds. "When you go unrepresented, you're unrepresented for the whole transaction. As your Realtor, I'm representing you, and the process is very similar to buying a retail home. I know when you'll need the earnest money and full down payment, the benefit of going through a builder's preferred lender, upgrades to ask for, and other important elements that a buyer may not even know about."



14 on Cashill in Reno

Consider Contemporary Living

Lifestyle plays a big role in the type of house that works for any person and family. Options abound in Reno-Tahoe, but for those looking for low maintenance and quick access to city amenities, townhomes are a good option — for example, 14 on Cashill in Reno is a brand-new townhome development with units that will be available by June.

J.P. Menante, Realtor with Dickson Realty in Reno, represents the project and encourages people wanting a simpler life to take a look.

"We are offering a truly contemporary product from fit to finish," he says. "Townhomes are geared toward people who want to go skiing, ride their bikes, head on an adventure, and not worry about exterior maintenance."

Whether looking to purchase a new home or townhome, upgrade the kitchen, or keep the home in tip-top shape, these local experts have their craft dialed in. Contact them today to discover how to make your house a home this season.



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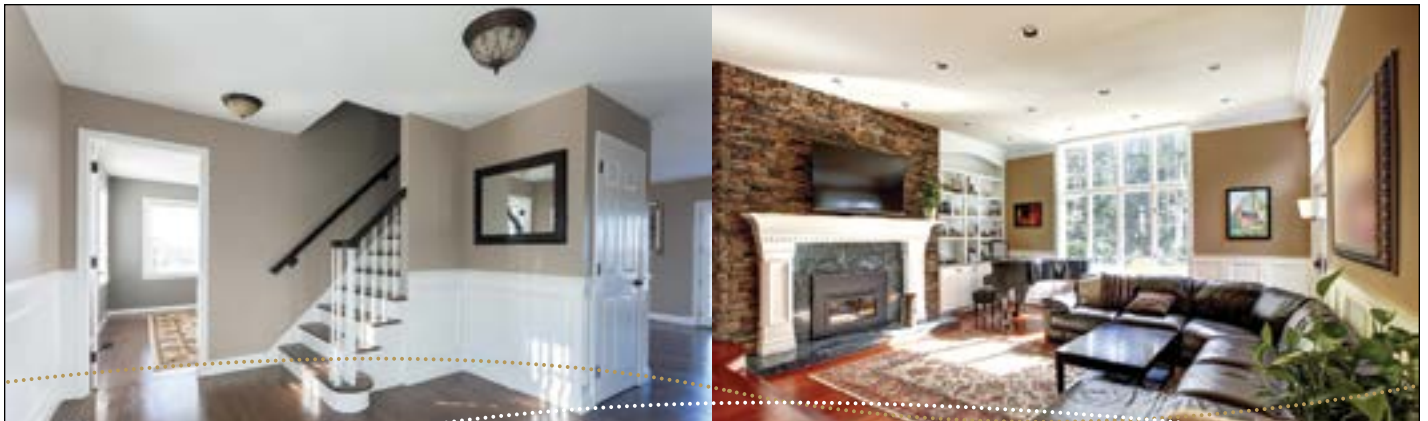
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